MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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ADVISORY - Important Information

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TO: All HAN Recipients

FROM: Dr. Sheila Pinette, Maine CDC Director

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SUBJECT: Influenza Update

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Influenza Update – Recommendations for Providers

Summary: Influenza activity in Maine is widespread with all three strains of influenza circulating, with influenza A/H3 as the predominant strain. Influenza activity is significantly higher than the 2011-2012 season with Maine CDC following up on 65 outbreaks as of Tuesday January 8th. Many Maine facilities are reporting influenza related hospitalizations, and health care facilities are experiencing a surge of ill individuals presenting for care. One pediatric death attributed to influenza was reported to Maine CDC in December. Influenza levels are expected to remain high for the next several weeks. Influenza vaccination is still strongly encouraged and is widely available, especially to protect those persons at risk of more severe disease. The vaccine appears to be a good match to the circulating strains this year, and it is not too late to get vaccinated. Vaccine is the best way to prevent disease, but early treatment with antiviral drugs can help reduce the severity of illness.

Recommendations:

- **Prevention:** Maine CDC recommends following the "No Flu 4 You" guidelines which include:
 - o **Wash your hands**: Both the general public and healthcare providers should remember to wash their hands frequently to prevent transmission of influenza
 - o Cover your cough: Use tissues, or cough into your sleeve
 - Stay home when you are sick: Symptomatic individuals should remain home while sick. Maine CDC recommends staying home until 24 hours after fever resolves without the use of medications.
 - Get Vaccinated: Maine CDC recommends vaccination for everyone aged 6 months and older, especially for those people who are at high risk of serious complications from influenza. Influenza vaccine is provided at no-cost by the state of Maine for children under the age of 19 years. Vaccine is still available through school sponsored vaccine clinics, healthcare providers, and many local pharmacies and offers protection in 14 days. For questions about vaccination please contact the Maine Immunization Program at 800-867-4775 or through immunizeme@maine.gov.

• Diagnostic Testing:

- o Testing is **not necessary** for most influenza cases at this point in the season
 - Providers should treat individuals with clinically compatible symptoms as if they have influenza
- o Influenza testing is recommended for individuals with clinically compatible illness who:
 - Are hospitalized
 - Have died
 - A diagnosis of influenza would affect clinical care, infection control, or management of contacts.
- o PCR confirmation at the state lab is **not required** or recommended except for:
 - inpatients with a clinically compatible illness who tested negative by rapid antigen tests
 - individuals with co-infection on rapid positive tests (positive for both A and B)
 - individuals associated with outbreaks
- **Treatment:** Tamiflu and Relenza are both approved antivirals for influenza.
 - Antiviral treatment is recommended **as early as possible** for any patient with confirmed or suspected influenza who:
 - Is hospitalized
 - Has severe, complicated, or progressive illness
 - Is at higher risk for influenza complication
 - o Treatment may be considered for any individuals with confirmed or suspected influenza
 - o Antiviral treatment is recommended for 5 days
- **Prophylaxis** may be recommended for:
 - Contacts of a patient with laboratory confirmed influenza who are at high risk of developing complications

- Prophylaxis is recommended for 10 days
- o Residents of a nursing home or other congregate setting where there is a laboratory confirmed case of influenza or an increase in influenza-like illness among residents
 - Prophylaxis recommendations vary by setting, consult current guidelines
- O Updated guidance for use of Antivirals for the Treatment and Chemoprophylaxis of Influenza are http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm
- **Reporting:** All influenza outbreaks and pediatric influenza deaths are reportable conditions to Maine CDC. Maine CDC also requests reports of:
 - o **any** laboratory confirmed influenza among hospitalized persons
 - o any suspicion of influenza among persons who have died
 - o any laboratory confirmed influenza associated with an outbreak

Reports can be provided to Maine CDC by fax at 207-287-8186 or by phone at 1-800-821-5821. Provider reporting is an essential component of influenza surveillance which is necessary to monitor the magnitude and severity of influenza in the state. Weekly influenza surveillance reports are available at: http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/influenza/influenza-surveillance-weekly-updates.shtml.

Federal CDC recently created a CDC Influenza Application for Clinicians and Health Care Professionals. This app makes it easy to find updated CDC recommendations and influenza activity on your iPad, iPhone, or iPod Touch. Android based apps will be coming in a future update. For more information on this app please go to http://www.cdc.gov/flu/apps/cdc-influenza-hcp.html or search for it in the app store.